

# Family Matters

*Improving Health Together*

**May 2018  
Newsletter**

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## Could the Bacteria in your Belly Keep you Healthy?

By Sheila Gains, Family & Consumer  
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Yes, when we are born our belly/gut  
begins to grow the bacteria that we  
will need to stay healthy. This bacteria  
is often transferred to infants who are  
delivered with a vaginal birth or  
during breastfeeding. If this is not  
possible it might take a little longer,  
but young children build a healthy  
amount of good gut bacteria.

Having a healthy amount and type of  
gut bacteria is important in helping us  
stay healthy throughout our lives.  
These bacteria helps us digest food,  
absorb fluids and nutrients,  
strengthen our immune system and  
control our appetite. They even  
protect us from more harmful  
bacteria. The majority of the bacteria  
we have in our bodies live in our gut,  
and most of these live in our large  
colon. We need a variety of bacteria  
in our gut to help us function at our  
best. If we don't have a healthy  
balance of gut bacteria the chances of  
us experiencing diarrhea, stomach  
aches and cramping increase.

Eating foods that are high in dietary  
fiber like fruits and vegetables, helps  
establish and maintain good gut



bacteria. Reducing stress also helps  
your gut stay healthy. Have you ever  
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have a stomach ache or diarrhea?

***People living in Colorado are  
searching online for  
information on gut bacteria  
more than people in most other  
states.***

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**COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY  
EXTENSION**

*Helping families increase physical  
activity and enjoy healthy foods*

**Prebiotics are foods that help good bacteria grow in your gut:**

Examples of foods that are high in prebiotics include asparagus, chicory root, garlic, onions, sweet potato, whole wheat, bananas, berries, oatmeal, dry beans and leeks. You can restore the amount and variety of gut bacteria you have by eating foods with lots of fiber that feed healthy gut bacteria.

**Probiotics are live beneficial gut bacteria:**

Probiotics can be found in foods such as fermented sauerkraut or fermented pickles, kimchi, yogurt (with live and active cultures),

kefir, and kombucha (fermented tea). Aged cheeses, miso and tempeh (fermented soy beans) are also good sources of probiotics. Probiotics can also be found in many specialty foods and supplements.

As well as eating foods that contain probiotics some people may be advised to take a probiotic supplement. Medications like antibiotics can disrupt the bacteria balance in your gut.

If you are tempted to take or give a probiotic supplement yourself or to children, make sure to talk to your healthcare provider first.

**Let's Talk**

Ask children "Did you know there are about 10 trillion microbes living in your belly?" Explain to them that most of the bacteria in their belly is helping their body stay healthy. They can help feed the good bacteria by eating foods that the bacteria like. Belly bacteria like all kinds of fruits and vegetables, oatmeal, yogurt and beans, just to name a few. Ask children to help you plan a meal or snack that includes at least one food that belly bacteria like.

Examples: Baked whole wheat pita chips and bean dip; Yogurt and fresh berries; Oatmeal and sliced bananas; Carrot sticks and dip made with plain yogurt and herbs or spice mix.



Recipes for Health:

**Asparagus Mushroom Melts**

**Ingredients:**

- 4 English Muffins or eight slices of bread (whole wheat)
- ¼ cup onion, finely minced
- 1 cup mushrooms, chopped
- 1 ½ teaspoons oil
- 1 pound fresh asparagus, tough end removed and sliced crosswise into ½ rounds
- ½ teaspoon vinegar
- Dash of salt & pepper
- ¾ cup shredded cheese (3 oz.)

**Directions:**

1. Have children help wash and snap off the thick ends of asparagus. Adults should cut into ½ inch rounds.
2. Children can arrange cut muffin halves or bread in a single layer, cut sides up, on a baking sheet. Adults lightly toast/brown muffin halves in oven set on broil. Watch closely!
3. Adult uses a large skillet over medium-high heat to sauté onions and mushrooms in oil. Stir often until just beginning to brown.
4. Add asparagus, seasoning and vinegar. Sauté, stirring often, until asparagus is barely tender. Season lightly with salt and pepper.
5. Children can help divide vegetable mixture equally onto the muffin halves and top each muffin with shredded cheese.
6. Adults broil until the cheese melts. Watch carefully to avoid burning!

Refrigerate leftovers within 2 hours.

**Additional Resources:**

Recipe adapted from University of Oregon, Food Hero:  
<http://foodhero.org/recipes/asparagus-mushroom-melt>



